

March 4, 2019.

To: London Ward Councillors

Cc: London Residents, London City Clerk, London City Manager

Fellow Members of City Council:

Update On 60-Day London Transit Funding Process

Last month City Council and City Staff began a 60-day process to identify and agree on London transit funding projects to submit to the Province of Ontario, and through them to the Federal Government, to access \$374.8 million in Federal/Provincial funding for transit infrastructure improvements for our City. That 60-day process ends March 31 which is 3½ weeks from now. A number of Ward Councillors and members of the Public have asked for an update on that process. The purpose of this note is to provide that update.

Background Of the Funding That Is Available and the 60-Day Timeline

Under the *Investing in Canada* plan the Government of Canada has earmarked \$204.8 million for London to improve the capacity of public transit infrastructure, improve the quality and safety of existing and future transit systems, and improve access to public transit systems. In support of that plan the Province of Ontario has earmarked \$170 million and London's previous City Council approved \$130 million of matching funds. The total identified monies, therefore, are \$504.8 million with \$374.8 million from senior government with \$130 million from the City of London.

Although they have earmarked funds the Government of Canada and the Province have not approved funding. They have requested that the City of London submit proposals for specific projects that each a) meet the Federal/Provincial funding criteria, b) have a well-documented business case, and c) have been approved for submission by London's new City Council. Given the anticipated approvals interruption that will accompany the upcoming Federal election, both the Federal Government and Province encouraged London to submit their proposals by March 31, 2019 in order to improve the odds of funding approval this calendar year. In response, London City Council last month agreed a schedule to identify and approve transit projects for submission; the end date of that schedule is March 31.

Key Dates In The 60-Day Schedule

- **March 6:** package detailing the history of London's transit project to be distributed as part of the Civic Works Committee agenda.
- **March 13:** listing of potential transit projects distributed to City Council and the Public.
- **March 14:** special meeting of the Civic Works Committee to allow City Staff to present an overview of London's transit history and to answer Ward Councillors questions.
- **March 20:** Public Participation Meeting at Centennial Hall starting at 3:00 pm to allow members of the Public to ask questions and voice comments related to the potential transit projects.
- **March 25:** SPPC meeting in Council Chambers to discuss and approve a list of projects for submission to the Province.
- **March 26:** Council Meeting to pass a resolution for the projects to be submitted.
- **March 31:** final date for City Staff to submit the projects to the Province for funding approval.

Other Information On The Process

1. **The criteria for making the Potential Projects list.** It is important to note that this funding discussion will not be London's last. London's Transportation Master Plan calls for \$1.3 billion in transportation spending by 2030. The projects being considered for the 60-day plan are ones that can access the \$374.8 million in Federal/Provincial funds that were specifically allocated for London public transit projects. With that in mind the criteria for any project making the 60-day Project List are:
 - a. It must meet the *Investing in Canada* criteria of being a significant public transit infrastructure project. Projects that focus on transit operational funding (i.e. more frequent bus service) or non-transit funding (i.e. improved roads/bridges for car traffic) do not meet the funding criteria and, therefore, would likely not make the 60-day Project List.
 - b. It must be a project capable of City Staff providing sufficient cost and engineering information for Federal/Provincial submission within the 60-day deadline. Projects that ready today for funding submission will be more likely to make the Project List than new ideas. That said, transportation planning in London will not end on March 31; it is anticipated that there will be many new and important transportation projects created and approved during the months and years ahead.
2. **What City Staff are currently doing.** Following the February Council resolution directing the creation of potential projects City Staff have worked hard to build that list and to collect the cost and engineering details necessary for City Council and the Public to properly evaluate each project. A discussion of projects without proper cost and engineering detail could result in confusion and poor decision making. City Staff have identified March 13 as the date when the list of projects, with proper details, will be available.
3. **Important similarities and differences versus previous discussions around London transit.** Past discussions around transit infrastructure funding have focused around Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Regardless of their views on BRT most Londoners have been appreciative of the opportunity to get significant Federal/Provincial funding support and, in so doing, reduce the tax demands on our residents. Not losing that funding is a key focus of the current 60-day timeline. An important difference is while past BRT discussions have been all-or-nothing (i.e. approve or reject the total \$504.8 million plan) this process has broken transit into a list of potential projects. This project approach will let Londoners more easily identify improvements they want and to reject those they do not.

While this important London-focused work continues we are keeping the Federal and Provincial Governments in the loop. Both levels of government have been wonderfully supportive and await the submission of the Council-approved projects at the end of this month. We await the tabling of the projects by City Staff, the Public Participation meeting, and discussion in City Council over the next few weeks.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ed Holder

Deputy Mayor Jesse Helmer